



VolunteerVoice

"The voice of the Earth Team"

USDA--The Natural Resources Conservation Service

Summer 2004



"Claudia Chinook" in all her glory as she waits to be transported.



Volunteers work hard sanding down rough spray-foam finish.

Oregon

The Big One Didn't Get Away!!!

Thanks to NRCS Earth Team volunteers from the Dallas, Oregon area, the Rickreall Watershed Council now has a giant Salmon named Claudia, who is being used as a tool to educate individuals about healthy watersheds.

Over the summer of 2003, volunteers, along with area staff, built a giant salmon, standing a whopping 14-feet high and 30-feet long. The project began in June, as a result of an idea from the District Manager. The idea was

taken to a member of the Polk SWCD Board, who said, "Sure, we can build that," not knowing what he was getting into and what he was getting others into.

Claudia began as a frame constructed from rebar. She was built onto a 36 ft. flatbed trailer. Next, she was covered with chicken wire, wrapped in plastic, and taken to be covered with spray foam. The spray foam is rough when it dries, so volunteers spent weeks upon weeks hand sanding her smooth. The outside was then

covered with fiberglass, which again had to be sanded to remove hairs and slivers. Once the outside was completely fiberglassed, volunteers began on the inside, which also had to be fiberglassed. Because no one knew anything about fiberglass, this process took several tries. After finally getting the fiberglass to stick to the inside, it was sanded and prepared for paint. The final coats of paint went on the outside in late September. The inside is a mural of a watershed with wildlife and flora, including the life cycle of a salmon. The volunteers have been working on painting the inside since January, and it is still being worked on. This whale of a task has had the help of six high school volunteers, two college student volunteers, 10 adult volunteers, and six staff members.

Claudia is owned by the Rickreall Watershed Council and in addition to being used as a tool to educate about healthy watersheds. Claudia Chinook is available for rent for educational purposes or other activities.

Claudia is a reality because of the many hands of the Earth Team volunteers.

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Maryland

Students artfully promote conservation

*by R. Jay Ugiansky, Resource
Conservationist, Maryland*

When NRCS staff approached local high school art students to draw and paint the background for a Backyard Conservation Display they eagerly volunteered to take up the challenge. A group of 17 National Honors Society students from River Hill High School, Clarksville, Maryland, volunteered their artistic abilities. NRCS staffs from the National Plant Materials Center (NPMC) and the Maryland State Office have designed/setup a display every year for the past six years at the Maryland Home and Garden Show to show attendees how conservation can be achieved in their own backyard. This was the first year volunteers were involved with display preparations and their assistance proved to be invaluable. The backdrop they painted was an illusion of an actual backyard, which created the perfect setting to showcase backyard conservation practices.

The students worked on the project in small groups after school. They volunteered over 120 hours to complete the 6' x 18' painted canvas backdrop. Students worked primarily independently with NPMC staff providing guidance several times throughout the project including the initial sketching. The final design resulted in a blending of ideas from both the students and NRCS. The layout of the design and perspective was aided by an AutoCAD drawing provided by the NPMC.

Elements of the backyard scene were sketched by one student and then projected onto the canvas

with an overhead projector and traced. To provide continuity the students included elements of the actual constructed display - a garden, pond, fence and patio in the background. This greatly enhanced the

illusion of an actual backyard by blurring the lines between the constructed display and the painted backdrop.

All the students enjoyed participating in the project and exercising their art talents as well as learning about NRCS' conservation practices and becoming Earth Team volunteers. NRCS

Back Row (L-R): Ms. Jenkins, Dennis Kim, Regina Atwood, Yoon Hwa Choi, Rachel Kim, Hannah Park, Andrew Cho, Rebecca Zia. Front Row (L-R): Colleen McArdle, Jeanelle Mak, Nicole Choe, Hattie Yoo.



Realistic backyard created for NRCS display.

was very grateful for the excellent work the students put into the project and was astounded by the depth that the painted background gave the display.

People at the show commented on the creativeness and uniqueness of the display and how it created an inviting setting to teach about conservation.

DEMOGRAPHICS PLAY A PART IN RECRUITMENT

*by Rose Marie Updegraff
Regional Volunteer Coordinator, East Region
State Volunteer Coordinator, Pennsylvania*

When you're looking for volunteers, think about different groups and what appeals to them. We know we have a product to sell, but do we really know our buyer?

As our population shifts, more than half of all growth between now and 2050 will occur among Hispanics, Asians and Pacific Islanders. By the year 2030, the non-Hispanic, white population will make up less than half of the people under 18, but three-fourths of those over 65.

The Hispanic and Asian populations will more than double in this time period. Volunteering is not necessarily a part of their tradition. When recruiting from these groups, it is helpful to get your message in their communities. This can be done by placing articles in their newspapers, giving presentations at English classes in their community centers, and speaking to their church groups.

There is a lot of competition for volunteers. Prospective volunteers seek meaningful ways to give their time and talent. Different marketing strategies work with different age groups.

TEENS AND STUDENTS

Technology is a big part of their lives. Research has shown that they are very optimistic, have strong personal and family values, and are aware of social concerns.

- Provide a way to test a skill.
- Add a new dimension to a

resume.

- Provide a form of career exploration.
- Build a network of contacts for a later job search.
- Fulfill a college course requirement.

TWENTY SOMETHING

Born between 1965 – 1972
This age group is self oriented, does not bow to authority and



wants quality time.

- Provide opportunities to meet people in a social setting.
- Provide opportunities to develop skills and a resume.
- Provide opportunities to combine work and fun.
- Focus on "what's in it for them!"

BABY BOOMERS

Born between 1946 – 1964

This includes 45 percent of the adult population. Seventy percent of the women work outside the home.

- Provide opportunities to have leadership roles.
- Provide opportunities to do meaningful work.
- Involve the family to spend time together
- Maintain professional skills
- Opportunities that fit with retirement.

SANDWICH GENERATION

Born between 1925 – 1945

This group is sandwiched between returning baby boomers and aging parents. In some cases, they have experienced buyouts and early retirements.

- Be flexible with time commitments.
- Provide ways to train others and pass on knowledge and skills.
- Provide opportunities to use experience and contacts to create and manage projects.

SENIORS

Over 60 is the most rapidly growing group. By 2025, they will comprise 25 percent of the population. The younger seniors in the 60 to 70 age group are recently retired, in good health, have good discretionary income and are mobile. They volunteer to stay connected to interests or careers. They are interested in:

- Opportunities to help peers.
- Challenging work.
- Opportunities to use experience and talents.
- Staying connected with younger people.
- Direct personal contact.



Earth Team volunteers place protective tubing around each tree and shrub to prevent damage from wildlife browsing.

Montana

Volunteers complete tree planting project

by Tasha Gibby, Public Affairs Specialist, Montana

With funding from the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), two Earth Team volunteer groups combined efforts last April to



(Standing L to R): Butch Roberts (FFA Advisor), Travis Begger, Dusty Hartse, Aaron Maus, Joe Bakken, Nick Maus, Dustin Gorman, Josh Helvik, Beau Roberts, Jordan LaBelle, Tel Bacon, Luke Ziemer, Kirby Eisenhauer (Environmental Science Instructor). (Kneeling L to R): Justin Grey Eagle, Amanda Hansen, Sara Begger, Nikki Hoagland, Lauren Ford, Natasha Barnaby, Kyle Kreitingner, Brant Harrell.



An Earth Team Volunteer, also an Associate Degree Nurse (ADN) instructor, fits a bicycle helmet on a student at Nix Elementary during Farm Safety Day Camp.

South Carolina

Nursing students make a difference

by Amy Maxwell, Public Affairs Specialist, South Carolina

NRCS and the Orangeburg County, South Carolina, conservation partnership can be proud of its nursing student-Earth Team volunteers from Orangeburg/Calhoun Technical College who have logged over 1,000 hours of community/volunteer service working at the *Progressive Farmer* Farm Safety Day Camp and the Make-A-Splash Water Festival – events organized by the Orangeburg Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). For the past five years, these energetic and enthusiastic students, along with their instructors, have been involved in a variety of roles at the two events, from serving as speakers at different learning stations or doing puppet shows, to fitting bicycle helmets.

The Make-A-Splash national water festival – designed for 4th and 5th graders – explains watersheds; how they work and the importance of water quality.

The *Progressive Farmer* Farm Safety Day Camp has grown from 100 participants in its first year to nearly 300 at last year's event and is designed to teach kids how to stay safe. "I don't know what we would do without these nursing student-Earth Team volunteers. They have been essential to the success of these events," said Orangeburg SWCD Manager Glenda Lewis. "Their dedication to helping us spread the word about the importance of conservation and safety is very impressive. We are so thankful!"

Bluebirds flourish

Courtesy of Marshall News Messenger

Bluebirds in northeast Texas are benefiting from an ongoing program to increase nesting opportunities.

Beginning in 2003 in Bowie County, Texas and adjoining counties and parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma, the NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Program was instrumental in reversing the decline in bluebird populations. With an initial startup of 150 bluebird nest boxes in Bowie County, interest has grown and bluebirds are becoming more common in both rural and urban areas.

Now in its second year, Earth Team volunteers are taking the message and boxes into more than 10 counties in northeast Texas. The adjoining states are participating as well.

Earth Team volunteers work with local soil and water conservation districts to secure landowners who agree to place nesting boxes on their property. Volunteers assemble the boxes and monitor nesting success.

According to Paul Leggett, District Conservationist in Harrison County, "success of the Bluebird trail is dependent on assistance from Earth Team volunteers who have donated thousands of hours to the success of this project."



Gilbert helps with grape harvest during his stay on an organic farm in Italy..

Delaware

Lessons from Italy

by Griff Gilbert, Earth Team Volunteer, Delaware

(The Earth Team Program attracts a wonderful group of volunteers, bringing all types of life experiences to the program and its projects. The following story highlights just one of those volunteers and the three months he spent working on an organic farm in Italy.)

Recently, I was able to spend three months working on a farm, called Spannocchia (span-OH-kia), located just outside of Siena near Italy's Chianti district. Spannocchia is the type of estate referred to as an "agriturismo," which means it is both a fully functioning farm and a resort, with guest cottages interspersed among its vineyards, pastures, and woods. One of the Spannocchia community's driving forces is its goal to be as self-sustaining as it possibly can. According to Spannocchia's staff they practice a "cyclical system of agriculture, where crops feed the animals, the animals produce the manure that is used to fertilize the field to grow the next cycle of crops. The animals and crops feed the human residents and visitors, and the humans provide the labor necessary to make it all work." While no community is ever completely

self-reliant, Spannocchia does achieve a moderately independent and long-term sustainable system.

By employing ecologically sound agricultural techniques in its fields, on its vines, and with its forests, the farm cares for its surrounding environment, thereby helping to secure its own sustained survival. One of these agricultural techniques is the practice of organic farming. Organic farming is defined as farming that actually helps keep the environment healthy.

In parts of Italy, and especially at Spannocchia, the term "organic" means this and more. Their organic agriculture is rooted in respect for the surrounding ecology and a high regard for the traditional methods of Tuscan farming. Spannocchia applies old-world practices to its modern-day farm. I was fortunate enough to help the staff do this during the grape and olive harvests.

Spannocchia's approach to cultivating its vineyards and orchards means investing enough time and energy to treat every

bunch of grapes and every olive branch with a passionate care and concern. Each grapevine is carefully hand-tended year-round to ensure its good health and high production potential. Every olive tree is individually pruned and cared for by hand to guarantee a high yield. All of the grapes and olives are thoughtfully hand-picked, eliminating any damaging effects from heavy, polluting machinery used on many large-scale industrial farms. Crop fertilizer is 100 percent natural and produced on-site by animals with their manure, and by people in the form of compost. Spannocchia wastes practically nothing. From old teabags to egg shells, most things either end up feeding the pigs or biodegrading in the compost pile.

In its effort to produce healthy and safe crops Spannocchia avoids using harmful chemical pesticides. If a sick vine is found in the vineyard, long-standing traditional techniques (various pruning styles, etc.) are employed to prevent any spread of the disease and possibly cure the plant. Overall, the vast majority of Spannocchia's crops are extremely healthy.

The evidence for this was on my dinner plate. I had the great fortune of eating fresh, crisp beans that I had picked from the garden earlier that day and tasted delicious olive oil just pressed from olives I had picked in the last month.

If I couldn't finish my heaping portions of fresh foods, then I would simply scrape the remainder into a compost or pig's slop bucket, which would eventually become more fertilizer for more crops for more people to enjoy. That is an Italian education in sustainability, applicable anywhere in the world.

Connecticut

“Tour des Farms” a big success

*by Carol Donzella,
State Volunteer Coordinator,
Connecticut*

On a crisp, overcast Saturday morning in October, over 70 enthusiastic individuals brought their curiosity and bicycles to South Glastonbury to participate in the first annual **Connecticut Tour des Farms**. The purpose of the tour was to highlight the value and contributions that agriculture brings to Connecticut and its communities.

Riders pedaled their way through the heart of central Connecticut’s orchard country while seeing, smelling, and tasting a variety of locally grown fruits and vegetables, as well as local baked goods, preserves, ice cream, and cider.

Bikers met at the Hopewell Elementary School in South Glastonbury, where they received several handouts, *Farm Bucks* (to spend at the farms of their choice), and minor tune-ups from an Earth Team Volunteer mechanic. Armed with the rules of the road and fueled with fresh-baked bagels and beverages, riders set off to explore the 18-mile scenic loop.

Riders cruised along the Connecticut River and viewed old tobacco sheds and the rich, floodplain soils that have supported its inhabitants for centuries. The ride also provided the oppor-



Bikers prepare to start in the first annual Connecticut Tour des Farms.

tunity to visit the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry, the nation’s oldest continuously operated ferry service (since 1655).

Following the green spray-painted arrows and directions provided by the invaluable Earth

Team volunteers stationed at critical points along the route, all the riders completed the course, were happily fed, and left with their fresh produce and baked goods knowing a little more about the farming community in Connecticut.

Prairie Wetland Learning area

by Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist, Minnesota

Worthington, Minnesota, is fortunate to have a Prairie Wetland Learning area where elementary school students can learn about wetlands and their restoration from NRCS conservationists, Earth Team volunteers, and representatives from other Federal and local natural resource agencies.

Over the past 100 years, more than 95 percent of the wetlands in southwest Minnesota have been filled or drained for agricultural use.

Thanks to the strong conservation partnership between NRCS and U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service, 24 acres were purchased and used to establish the wetland learning area.

This wonderful area offers learning opportunities that educate the public about protecting, restoring and enhancing wetlands.

For additional information visit:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/> and for information on wetlands activities in the Worthington area, contact Steve Woltjer, NRCS District Conservationist, at 507-376-9150 or steven.woltjer@mn.usda.gov.

Great opportunity to participate

What is World Water

Monitoring Day? The year 2002 marked the 30th anniversary of the United States Clean Water Act. America's Clean Water Foundation celebrated by launching

World Water Monitoring Day on October 18. World Water Monitoring Day serves as a global educational platform for watershed leaders, educators and trained volunteers to help the less experienced to understand how the actions of individuals in a watershed can impact many others.

In 2003, over 5,200 sites were registered with 433 sites registered outside of the United States.

When Is It? Official testing begins September 18, 2004 and

ends on World Water Monitoring Day October 18, 2004.

NRCS Participation in 2003: Over 36 sites were registered by NRCS and Earth Team during the 2003 World Water Monitoring event. Testing sites varied from parks, golf courses, commercial land and residential land.

How Can The Earth Team Get Involved? You can get a group or individuals to participate. Families can join as well, but keep in mind that participants must be at least 14 years of age to be an Earth Team volunteer.

This event will help communities better understand the value of water quality monitoring and citizen involvement as important tools to protect and preserve local watersheds throughout the world.

How Do I Register My Site? Register your site and test results on the World Water Monitoring website

www.worldwatermonitoringday.org It's important to enter NRCS-Earth Team in the group/organization area of the website

How Do I Order Test Kits? Test kits will be distributed to Earth Team groups only this year.

LANDCARE will provide as many free kits as possible. State Coordinators should consolidate orders and submit one request for all offices to Tina Morris, **no late than July 15, 2004.**

You may include office addresses so LANDCARE can ship test kits directly to participating offices. Please e-mail your order with number of kits and shipping address to Tina at: tina.morris@swcs.org

For information on World Water Monitoring Day, visit www.worldwatermonitoringday.org or contact Ed Moyer, America's Clean Water Foundation World Water Monitoring Day Coordinator at e.moyer@acwf.org

Submission to "VolunteerVoice"

Articles and photographs for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to tina.morris@swcs.org. If you prefer, copy can be mailed or faxed to Tina Morris, Soil and Water Conservation Society, 945 SW Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, Iowa 50021, fax number (515) 289-1227.

Articles should be no more than 350 words. Please remember to include photographs to illustrate the article. JPG's images are preferred. Slides and prints are accepted. If you are using a digital camera, remember to set the camera to the highest quality resolution.

For information about the Earth Team and the VolunteerVoice, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov or call 1-888-4-LANDCARE, or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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